



CALIFORNIA OFFICE  
OF TRAFFIC SAFETY

# Summer 2015 Seat Belt Usage Report



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## Summer 2015 Executive Summary

2015 was the fourth year that California utilized the current guidelines for collecting occupant restraint usage data (i.e., seat belt usage data). The current guidelines set by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), uses a fatality-based frame and includes an extremely wide collection of roads for sampling.

The data included in this report are for the Summer “post-test” portion of the 2015 survey. A Spring “pre-test” was collected as well and the results from these two surveys will be combined for the overall 2015 usage rate for NHTSA.



There were no causes for delays in data collection which occurred in June, July, and August. The Summer data was collected at 142 sites across California. In all 18,282 occupants were observed, but belt use could not be determined for 315 (1.7%) occupants (normally due to dark windows or car speed). Consequently, the survey results were based on 17,967 observations.

In Summer 2015, the combined (i.e., for drivers and front seat passengers) usage rate was 97.97%. For comparison, Spring 2015 was 97.16% and the rate for Summer 2014 97.07%. These numbers indicate the usage rate in Summer 2015 was slightly higher (0.90%) than in Summer 2014. Since Spring of 2013, the usage rate has consistently been between 97% and 98% and the data suggest that the usage rate in California has stabilized. It is likely that the unrestrained people are likely “hard core” in their resistance to seat belt use.

The accompanying report provides a further detailed breakdown of restraint usage.

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## Usage Rates by Road Type

This data shows the restraint usage rates by the type of road. More specifically, roads are sampled by three different federal classifications from the TIGER database. The TIGER database classifies roads as being “local”, “secondary”, or “primary” (for a detailed description of these road types, please see the last page of this report). There were small differences between restraint usages based on road type during the Summer 2015 survey.



Restraints were used slightly less on secondary roads than they were on local and primary roads. Compared to previous surveys, however, this gap has been largely closed and would not be considered meaningful for Summer 2015. This is a consistent finding in recent surveys and mirrors the Summer 2014 results.

The consistent usage across road types is a positive finding. It suggests that Californians are overcoming the idea that they do not need to buckle up as consistently when they are traveling shorter distances on more local roads.

Combined Data – All Occupants

	Local	Secondary	Primary	All Roads
Usage Rates	98.06	97.83	98.36	97.97
Standard Error	.009	.007	0.004	.005
Sample Sizes	1,260	10,034	6,673	17,967
95% Confidence Interval	96.36-99.78%	96.35-99.31%	97.50-99.22%	96.95-98.99%

## Usage Rates for Drivers

The usage rates below indicate that drivers are a little less likely to wear their belts on secondary roads than they are on primary or local roads. This pattern is the same as that found in 2013 and in Spring 2014.



The sustained improvement in local road belt usage is particularly notable. The rates on secondary and primary roads have stayed relatively consistent over the past few years. Overall, however, the gap between different road types has reduced significantly in recent surveys, and the gap is now negligible.

As a result, the improvement in local road usage has been a positive finding as these roads are generally more dangerous on a miles driven basis.

### Driver Only Data

	Local	Secondary	Primary	All Roads
Usage Rates	97.77	97.97	98.62	97.94
Standard Error	.010	.009	.004	.006
Sample Sizes	1,002	7,413	5,035	13,450
95% Confidence Interval	95.85-99.69%	96.12-99.83%	97.93-99.32%	96.73-99.16%

## Usage Rates for Passengers

This data shows the restraint usage rates for front seat passengers. The usage rates for these front seat passengers are estimated in the same way that the combined rates and the driver-only rates are estimated.

The results for passenger showed more variation than driver usage. Like driver use, however, usage was still highest on local roads.

While primary and secondary road passengers wore their belts less frequently than local passengers, the rates are still all very high. The sustained improvement in local road belt use is an encouraging finding that seems to be a solid result over recent surveys.



Passenger Only Data

	Local	Secondary	Primary	All Roads
Usage Rates	99.34	97.44	97.50	98.05
Standard Error	.005	.004	.007	.005
Sample Sizes	258	2,621	1,638	4,517
95% Confidence Interval	98.36-100%	96.72-98.17%	96.15-98.85%	97.14-98.97%



## Usage Rates by County

This table shows the combined (drivers and passengers) restraint usage rates in each of the fourteen counties included in the statewide survey.

These specific counties were selected to provide a representative sampling of California, consistent with NHTSA's guidelines. Of the fourteen counties, eight were selected from the more populous counties while the remaining six were selected from the less populated counties. In addition, a representative balance of northern and southern California was used so that the survey was representative of the entire state and not biased toward a particular region.



Overall, all of the counties have continued to have relatively high usage rates. In addition, there does not appear to be the differences between rates based on the geography of the county (i.e., northern or southern, coastal or inland).

### COMBINED USAGE BY COUNTY - ALL ROAD TYPES

County	Summer2015 Usage Rate	Observations
Sacramento	100.00%	1,244
Riverside	99.92%	1,318
Los Angeles	99.54%	1,281
Fresno	99.50%	886
Sonoma	98.96%	1,367
Merced	98.80%	921
Mendocino	97.56%	1,736
San Diego	97.29%	2,375
Monterey	97.18%	640
Alameda	96.69%	1,721
Shasta	94.97%	1,199
Kern	94.67%	1,230
San Bernardino	93.55%	1,057
El Dorado	92.57%	992
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>97.07%</b>	<b>17,967</b>

## Detailed Description of Road Types

Code	Name	Definition
S1100	Primary Road	Primary roads are generally divided, limited-access highways within the interstate highway system or under state management, and are distinguished by the presence of interchanges. These highways are accessible by ramps and may include some toll highways.
S1200	Secondary Road	Secondary roads are main arteries, usually in the U.S. Highway, State Highway or County Highway system. These roads have one or more lanes of traffic in each direction, may or may not be divided, and usually have at-grade intersections with many other roads and driveways. They often have both a local name and a route number.
S1400	Local Neighborhood Road, Rural Road, City Street	These are generally paved non-arterial streets, roads, or byways that usually have a single lane of traffic in each direction. Roads in this feature class may be privately or publicly maintained. Scenic park roads would be included in this feature class, as would (depending on the region of the country) some unpaved roads.